UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR BUREAU OF RECLAMATION

MID-PACIFIC REGION SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA

DRAFT FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

CONSTRUCTION OF AN IRRIGATION WELL ON THE WASHOE STEWART RANCH

| Recommended by: | Date: | |
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| | Natural Resource Specialist | |
| | Mid-Pacific Regional Office | |
| Concurred by: | | |
| | Date: | |
| | Supervisory Natural Resource Specialist | |
| | Mid-Pacific Regional Office | |
| Concurred by: | | |
| - | Date: | |
| | Chief, Resource Management Division | |
| | Mid-Pacific Regional Office | |
| Approved by: | - | |
| | Date: | |
| | Deputy Regional Director | |
| | Mid-Pacific Regional Office | |

FONSI No.

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In accordance with section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, the Mid-Pacific Regional Office of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, has determined that the approval and associated funding for the construction of an irrigation well and the repair of an irrigation pond on the Washoe Stewart Ranch is not a major federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment and an environmental impact statement is not required. This Finding of No Significant Impact is supported by Reclamation's Draft Environmental Assessment (EA), Construction of an Irrigation well on the Washoe Stewart Ranch, and is hereby incorporated by reference.

BACKGROUND

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) will provide funding to the Washoe Tribe (Tribe) to construct a new irrigation well and repair an irrigation pond on the Washoe Stewart Ranch (Ranch) to provide a supplemental source of water to the Tribe to enable them to bring their agricultural production back to historical levels on the Ranch.

The Ranch consists of arable land conveyed to the Tribe in 1982 for agricultural and economic development. In the first several years of operation, the Tribe was able to rely on artesian wells and flows from the Carson River to provide sufficient water for cultivation of crops. Unfortunately, since that time there has been intense development on surrounding lands which have resulted in lower flows in the Carson River and the disappearance of the artesian wells.

Currently the Ranch relies entirely on surface water for irrigation which has been significantly impacted by the low flows in the Carson River and the disappearance of the artesian wells. The Ranch used to get three cuts of alfalfa a season and now is only able to produce two cuts in a good year. This has depleted the Ranch's income. At this production level, what once was a major contributor to the Tribe's economic development is no longer self sustaining.

FINDINGS

Reclamation has prepared an EA (see attached) which analyzes the impacts of the Proposed Action. Based on the analysis in the EA, Reclamation has found that the construction of an irrigation well and the repair of an irrigation pond on the Ranch would not result in significant impacts to the environment.

This Finding of No Significant Impact is based upon the following:

1. Surface water use would not change as a result of the proposed action. There would not be increases or decreases in the delivery of surface water. Surface water resources would not be overburdened as a result of the Proposed Action.

- 2. Groundwater resources are believed to be of good quality and quantity in the Carson Valley Groundwater Basin. Under the Proposed Action, groundwater use on the Ranch will increase during the growing season (mid April through mid October); though will not overburden the resource. Placement of the screening in the well casing will be distributed at different levels to minimize the stress to the aquifer. The irrigation well will be managed to ensure water use efficiency and water conservation. The Proposed Action would not adversely impact groundwater resources.
- 3. The Proposed Action will result in historical levels of agricultural production on the Tribe's land. The Proposed Action area has previously been disturbed and is within designated agricultural lands; therefore, the action would not be changing the historic land use. In fact, the Proposed Action is within designated agricultural lands and would result in an improvement to the productivity of agricultural lands. The Proposed Action would not adversely impact land use.
- 4. A species list was requested on March 10, 2009 and provided on March 24, 2009 from the Nevada Fish and Wildlife Office pursuant to section 7(c) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (Act). To the best of their knowledge there are no listed, proposed, or species of concern in the project area. The Washoe Environmental Protection Department (WEPD) conducted a site assessment of the area and found no endangered or threatened species. Due to the Proposed Action area being previously disturbed, no wilderness designations or unique ecosystem, biological community or its inhabitants are expected to be impacted by the project. The Proposed Action will not adversely impact biological resources.
- 5. An archaeological reconnaissance level inspection was conducted for the area of potential effect (APE) for the Proposed Action. This inspection revealed that no historic properties (historic or prehistoric) were found within the APE for the undertaking. The State Historic Preservation Officer has been consulted, and concurs with a finding of "no eligible historic properties and no historic properties affected (Appendix A)." The Proposed Action would not affect cultural resources.
- 6. The Proposed Action would enable the Tribe to exercise its reserved water right and therefore; provide a benefit to the Tribe and their ITAs. The Proposed Action would not adversely affect any Indian Trust Assets (ITAs).
- 7. The Proposed Action would benefit the Tribe by providing employment and additional revenue from the increase of agricultural production on the Ranch. The Proposed Action would not disproportionately affect minorities or low-income populations and communities. There would not be significant adverse impacts to human health or environmental effects associated with the Proposed Action.

ENVIORNMENTAL COMMITMENTS

If Reclamation approves the Proposed Action, the project would be subject to the restrictions and mitigation measures which had been devised during the project process. Failure to abide by the modifications below would be contrary to terms of the approval.

- A site monitor will be on site during project activities
- The irrigation well will be managed to ensure water use efficiency and water conservation
- A plan will be developed and followed regarding discharge of water during the development phase. Water will be contained within a specified area and discharge will be managed
- Native vegetation will be left when possible
- Equipment used will be checked for invasive weeds
- All invasive weeds will be cleared from site
- Dust abatement practices will be followed during the construction phase
- Migratory bird surveys will be completed prior to project construction to comply with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act
- If cultural or archaeological resources are encountered during site construction or drilling activities, work would stop and the Reclamation Area Archaeologist would be notified immediately